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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KAWC](#) [HR](#)
SUBJECT: GLAVAS: WINGS CLIPPED, BUT WATCH THE CLAWS

REF: A. ZAGREB 01
[1](#)B. 05 ZAGREB 1254
[1](#)C. 05 ZAGREB 827

Classified By: Ambassador Ralph Frank for reasons 1.4 (b) & (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY AND COMMENT: Branimir Glavas, the Slavonian strongman who broke ranks with PM Ivo Sanader and the ruling Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) last year (ref C), has been politically isolated and his power limited to Osijek and the surrounding county. While Glavas currently serves as the Osijek city council president and essentially controls the county government, his efforts to recruit allies from neighboring cities and counties have been generally snubbed by local politicians. A police investigation into the torture and liquidation of a number of Serb civilians in 1991 has strongly implicated Glavas (ref B), putting him on the defensive in his feud with the HDZ. The investigation has raised hopes for his indictment among his opponents and fears of retaliation among witnesses. State prosecutors are proceeding cautiously and will not indict without clear-cut evidence. While an indictment would bring a welcome end to a political career of corruption and intimidation, Post is confident the police investigation and HDZ efforts to isolate Glavas have already destroyed his national influence and reduced him to a regional concern. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

KINGPIN IN OSIJEK . . .

[1](#)2. (C) During a February 13-14 PolOff visit to Osijek, local contacts confirmed Glavas, local influence but also his isolation. According to the OSCE,s Vukovar field office director Andy Burrridge and his Osijek staff, Glavas still controls the local media and uses city council meetings to grand stand on whatever issue is on his mind. As council president, he controls all hiring within the city government and is quite skilled in placing his loyalists where he needs them to prolong his grip on power. NOTE: This is in keeping with Glavas, modus operandi. While still in the HDZ, Glavas served as president of the Parliamentary committee on appointments and nominations and was infamous for his exploitation of political patronage. END NOTE.

[1](#)3. (C) Adding to his local influence, Burrridge,s staff said Glavas took the best political minds in the county with him when he split with the HDZ, leaving little capable local opposition. The HDZ has also been disappointingly slow in rebuilding its powerbase in the area, as both the party,s city and county chairmen work full time in Zagreb within the GoC. COMMENT: The HDZ recently announced that it will hold its annual convention in Osijek in April, so Sanader may be preparing to buck this trend. END COMMENT.

. . . BUT NOT BEYOND

14. (C) What Glavas has been unable to control is his destiny outside of Osijek. Both Burridge and Osijek-based correspondent Drago Hedl agreed that Glavas has been completely unsuccessful in spreading his regional political movement, &The Croatian Democratic Forum of Slavonia and Baranja,8 beyond the borders of his home county. Glavas has been able to recruit only a few people from around Slavonia, according to the OSCE, and has not signed on anyone in a position of power. Hedl explained that Glavas went as far as drawing up a theoretical regional power structure and identifying cities that would take the lead in such areas as customs and agriculture, but politicians in places like Slavonski Brod and Pozega rebuffed him, knowing he is in a losing battle with Zagreb.

15. (C) In building his independent political movement (he still refuses to call it a party), Glavas was counting on the loyalty of certain key national figures whose political careers he helped create, such as Minister of Defense Berislav Roncevic and Ministry of Interior (MUP) State Secretary Ivica Bucanjic. Both, among others, have shunned

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Glavas and sworn loyalty to Sanader.

16. (C) Osijek County Prefect Kresimir Bubalo, a Glavas loyalist, admitted that the GoC has essentially broken contact with his office. He said ministries do not even respond to his letters regarding financing of county projects. However, the county is trying to push ahead without state support, he said, and succeeded, with help from the northwestern Croatian region of Istria, in opening an office in Brussels to attract EU investment.

ZAGREB 00000233 002 OF 002

LOCAL COALITION: A MARRIAGE OF CONVENIENCE

17. (C) Osijek Mayor Anto Djapic, president of the far-right Croatian Party of Rights (HSP), confessed that his alliance with Glavas is strange and one of political convenience. Glavas, regionalist movement is nothing more than a political sales job, the mayor explained. Glavas doesn't really believe in regionalism, Djapic noted, &he,s just a nationalist like me.8

18. (C) Djapic said that the HSP will stay in coalition with Glavas during Parliamentary elections expected in late 2007 and together they &will completely sweep the HDZ off Osijek,s political map.8 Djapic believes Glavas can draw about 15 to 20 percent of the vote, but only in Osijek county, not across Slavonia. In Djapic,s view, the more Sanader pressures Glavas, the more his local power will grow, but he will remain isolated. Djapic added that Glavas will not fade away, as he must remain politically active to sustain his power network.

19. (C) Whether the coalition will last through 2007 remains to be seen. The OSCE pointed out that Glavas thrives on conflict. He is most comfortable when he is on the attack. In the absence of the HDZ and with Glavas already showing signs of jealousy over the press, frequent attention to Djapic, they said, it would not be surprising to see Glavas eventually turn on his current ally.

INVESTIGATION: STILL SEARCHING FOR THE SMOKING GUN

110. (C) Osijek Police Chief Vladimir Faber told PolOff the investigation into the torture and murder of a number of Serb civilians in 1991 is nearly complete, but it is still questionable whether there is enough evidence to indict

Glavas, commander of the city defense at the time. The investigation has already led to the arrest of Fred Margus for unconnected killings, but Faber has been unable to find a compelling and reliable eyewitness to the murders he suspects were ordered by Glavas.

¶11. (C) Faber,s primary eyewitness, Krunoslav Fehir, has compromised his testimony by giving conflicting statements to the press despite police efforts to protect his identity. MUP,s witness protection unit has gained invaluable experience during the investigation and now has several other unnamed witnesses under protection. Faber is convinced that many key witnesses will come forward if Glavas is indicted and arrested.

¶12. (C) The decision to indict, however, remains with Chief State Prosecutor Mladen Bajic, who must be careful to avoid the impression of succumbing to political pressure. If he indicts without enough evidence, he explained, he will be accused of serving the political interests of Sanader. If he refuses to indict due to insufficient evidence, he will be accused of protecting Glavas. The consummate professional, Bajic has turned to the vast database of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in hopes of finding the additional evidence he needs to launch a clear-cut case.

¶13. (C) Bajic thinks he may find the key in the case against Tomislav Mercep, which ICTY prosecutors recently transferred to Croatia in the pre-indictment phase under the Tribunal's completion strategy. Mercep was Glavas' counterpart in Vukovar at the beginning of the war and was equally notorious for his tactics against the local Serb population. Bajic hopes that communications between Mercep and Glavas that are part of that case will establish the existence of an institutionalized command structure in which Glavas directed the triggermen in the Osijek murders.

FRANK